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CARING FOR THE POOR: AUGUSTINE'S PERSPECTIVE VIS-À-VIS LUKE'S READING OF "MOSES AND THE PROPHETS"

Lazaro N. Ervite, OSA

ABSTRACT

This paper delves into elements of Augustine's thoughts on caring for the poor particularly his interpretation of Lk 16:19-31 vis-à-vis Luke's interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures' teachings on caring for the poor. Both Augustine and the Scriptures see poverty negatively. Both see the oppression of the poor as bringing about the reversal motif which runs through the entire Scriptures and is illustrated in Lk 16:19-31. The Scriptures' insistence on serving justice in this life complements Augustine's tendency to seek ultimate justice in the afterlife. Luke's amplification of the *מִצְוָה* and the command to love one's neighbor into the imperative "Listen to Moses and the Prophets" supports Augustine's exhortation on loving one's neighbor as a way of loving God.

INTRODUCTION

The unequal distribution of income across the world shows an alarming gap between the rich and the poor. According to Human Development Reports (2005), the richest 20% have 74% of the income while the poorest 20% have only 2% of the income. The poorest 20% earn less than one US dollar a day.¹

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (henceforth, "the Parable" Lk 16:19-31) illustrates such a gap as it strongly recommends listening to "Moses and the Prophets." In the Parable, the rich man requests Abraham to extend mercy on him, and even to send Lazarus to cool his parched tongue. When all his requests are refused, he pleads that Abraham send Lazarus to his brothers.

Then Abraham gives him the definitive solution. He recommends listening to Moses and the Prophets (vv 29, 31). The right kind of action suggested by the Parable is generosity toward the poor as found in Moses and the Prophets, or the Hebrew Scriptures as such. The Torah (Moses) and the *Nevi'im* (Prophets)² have much to say about caring for the poor and preventing poverty from becoming prevalent. Caring for the poor and the needy is at the heart of Moses and the Prophets. New Testament (henceforth, NT) writers reconfigure it in their reflections on the Jesus-event and in their rereading of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Hebrew Scriptures see poverty as scandalous because YHWH gave his people a "good land" (Deut 1:25, 35; 3:25; 6:18), and they were richly endowed with material wealth (Deut 8:7-10). Because of the scandalous existence of poverty, YHWH protects the poor (Isa 3:13-15; 24:4ff; Zeph 3:12; Ps 14:6) and takes care of their needs (Isa 41:17-20). Moreover, YHWH saves the oppressed (Ps 76:9; 146:7-9) and despoils those who despoil the poor (Prov 22:23). Through a long succession of prophets, YHWH denounces all forms of oppression against the poor (Am 2:6-8; 4:1-3; 6:4-8; Mic 2:1-3; Isa 3:13-15; 10:1-4; Jer 22:13ff; Ezek 34:1-24). Similarly, YHWH demands his people to care for the poor and to oppose the poor's oppressors (Ex 22:21-24; Lev 19:10; Deut 15:1-11; 24:14, 17; Isa 58:1-12; Jer 7:5-7; Ezek 16:49; Zech 7:10) (Soares-Prabhu, 1985, pp. 234-5).

Among the NT books, Luke's Gospel stands out as having significantly reconfigured and amplified the Hebrew Scriptures' view of poverty and teaching on caring for the poor. There have been extensive studies on the Lukan perspectives on caring for the poor (Donahue, 1989). Like the Hebrew Scriptures, which deal mostly with economic destitution (Hoppe, 2004), recent studies on the poor in Luke have kept the economically destitute at the center stage (Donahue, 1989). The Parable is one of the special Lukan pericopes which illustrate Luke's concern for the poor.

Moreover, St. Augustine (354-430) makes several references to the Parable when he writes about caring for the poor.³ Through the Parable, he argues that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the poor:

But any beggar will say to me, wasted by disease, festooned in rags, faint with hunger, he will answer me and say, "It's me the kingdom of heaven is owed to. I'm like that Lazarus fellow, who lay in front of the rich man's house covered with sores, whose sores the dogs used to lick, and he tried to fill himself with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. I'm more like him," he says; "it's our sort to whom the kingdom of heaven properly belongs, not the sort of people who wear purple and fine linen and feast sumptuously everyday (Sermon 41.1).

Augustine's interest in the Parable partly stems from the massive gulf between the rich and the poor in the Roman Empire, particularly in North Africa in his time. A number of his Sermons and other writings deal with caring for the poor (van Bavel, 1993, p. 5). One of his purposes in forming a religious community where everything was held in common was to protest against massive economic inequalities in his time. As bishop of Hippo, Augustine was immersed in the world of numerous poor people who frequented him for food and other needs. Possidius, Augustine's student and friend, recounts how Augustine would go as far as selling sacred vessels to have something to give to the poor. He writes:

If his church needed money he told the Christian people that he had nothing to give to the poor. For the benefit of captives and the large number of needy he ordered the holy vessels to be broken and melted down for distribution among the poor (1988, p.103).

Augustine's "option for the poor"⁴ was so paramount that the OSA Constitutions (2008) underscore it:

After the example of St. Augustine, we are obliged to give a coherent and prophetic witness to the preferential option for the

poor, and make a serious effort to imitate Christ, showing that we are in solidarity with those who are materially poor and who must live on the margins of society (No. 73; see also No. 183).

This paper presents truncated elements of Augustine's thoughts on caring for the poor, particularly his interpretation of Luke 16:19-31 vis-à-vis Luke's understanding of the teachings of "Moses and the Prophets" on caring for the poor.

ON THE POOR AND POVERTY

Augustine does not condemn riches as such. Rather he condemns getting so attached to one's wealth, becoming proud and neglecting the poor. He cites Abraham as a rich but a humble man (cf. Gen 13:2). Abraham is neither attached to his wealth as shown in his readiness to sacrifice his greatest wealth – Isaac, his only son, nor does he neglect the poor as shown in his extraordinary hospitality (cf. Gen 18; Sermon 113A.6).

Among the NT writers, Luke is the most interested in πλούσιος "rich man."⁵ The πλούσιος in the Parable is the opposite of Abraham – the caring and generous rich man. The Parable's rich man is attached to his superabundant wealth and refuses to listen to Moses and the Prophets who keep on exhorting him to care for the poor. Moses enjoins the rich to share their blessings with the poor through Jubilee legislation (Lev 25:8 ff), Sabbath Year law (Ex 23:10-11; Lev 25:1-7; Deut 15:1-11), etc. The rich man, whose excesses belong rightfully to the poor, typifies the rich persons who fail to listen to what Moses commands. In the Lukan context, the rich man typifies those who accumulated the bulk of the limited resources of the Mediterranean world (Malina, 1981, p. 83; Graham, 1988, p. 100).

Augustine never considers poverty—lack of essential material goods—as a value in itself. Augustine's exhortation for his followers to share things in common aims to eliminate poverty. It is his way

of bridging the massive socio-economic inequality during his time (van Bavel, 1984, pp. 50-1). Further Augustine does not idealize poverty. For him, caring for the poor must be aimed at eliminating poverty, not at perpetuating it out of selfish love. Quoting from The Confessions III.2.3 and Expositions of the Psalms 125.14, van Bavel writes:

It is better that no one should be impoverished than that you should perform a work of mercy. For a person who wishes others to be miserable, so that he or she can be merciful, is possessed by a cruel mercy, just as a doctor who would wish others to be sick, so that he might practice his art, would be a cruel healer (1993, p. 14).

We have noted Augustine's passion to care for the poor—how he sold liturgical vessels to have something to give to the poor. Augustine's attitude is in consonance with Deuteronomy's approach to tithing (Deut 12:6, 11, 17-19; 14:22-29; 26:1-13), which became a way to support the poor rather than to support sanctuaries. The tithes are given to the poor and they serve as sacrificial meal to be eaten by the poor in the sanctuaries (Hoppe, 2004, p. 38).

Further Augustine's conviction is in agreement with the Lukan reconfiguration of Isaiah's stress on social justice over religious practice (see Isa 1:16-17). Following the Prophet Isaiah, Luke criticizes the likes of the rich man whose religious practices mask their exploitation of the poor.

Augustine considers also the poor as the rich persons' way to heaven (Sermon 367.3). The existence of the poor provides an opportunity to test the rich because Christ identifies himself with the poor (Sermon 39.4.6). The care given by the rich to the poor is given to Christ. Augustine writes:

What are the poor people we give charity to, but our porters, whom we hire to transfer our assets from earth to heaven? You give the stuff to your porter; he carries what you gave him to

heaven. "How," you say, "does he carry it to heaven? Look I see him spending it all on food." It's by spending it on food, not by keeping it, that he transports it. ... Christ has received what you have given; it has been received by the one who gave you the means to give it; it has been received by the one who at the end will give you himself (Sermon 389.4).

Following Moses and the Prophets, Luke does not idealize poverty. Poverty does not necessarily make one closer to God. There should be no poverty because God has blessed God's people with abundance. The existence of poverty indicates that the teachings of Moses and the Prophets on caring for the poor are not followed. Further Luke also undermines the popular theology which regards wealth as a sign of blessing and poverty as curse. The original audience of the Parable would not necessarily see the rich man as evil and Lazarus as virtuous. Abundant possessions were taken as a gift from God (Gen 24:35; Job 42:10-17; 1 Tim 4:4-5). Lazarus' condition, like the deplorable plight of Job, could be taken as a divine curse (Jones, 1999, p. 176).

Augustine views the rich and the poor as needing each other. The rich must provide for the poor, while the poor must pray for the rich (Sermon 367.3). He sees the Parable as a reminder for the rich to do their duties lest they do not go to heaven. In his numerous commentaries on Mt 25:31-46, Augustine underscores that caring for the poor is tantamount to caring for Christ who is poor (Sermon 25.8; 239.6). "Christ is needy when a poor person is in need" (Sermon 38.8), "is hungry when the poor are hungry" (Sermon 390.2; Sermon 32.20). "To come to the aid of the poor members of Christ is to come to the aid of Christ the Head who is present and in need in the poor" (Sermon 53 A, 6; Sermon 236, 3). The poverty of Jesus Christ is reflected in the suffering of the poor and the oppressed. When human persons are in need, it is Christ who is in need (Wiles, 1995, pp. 99-100; van Bavel, 1993, pp. 12-3). In Sermon 47.1, he emphasizes that faithfulness to the poor Christ is the same as faithfulness to the poor neighbors.

This is a powerful rhetoric which can persuade many to help the poor. But a number of authors criticize Augustine because his rhetoric may imply that the poor are reduced to being means to personal sanctification. His rhetoric connotes that heaven awaits those who give to the poor since they actually give to Christ (van Bavel, 1993, p. 13).

Moreover, although Augustine was concerned to improve the lot of the poor, he did not go as far as advocating the change of social and political structures which mire the poor in poverty. Given his belief in the divine law which prescribes that the natural order be maintained and its disturbance forbidden, Augustine would have favored what we call today active non-violence. Augustine writes: "Not without reason do we have the power of kings, the death penalty which a judge may impose, the laws of the executioner, the weapons of the soldiers ..." (Letter 153.6.16; van Bavel 1993: 13). Besides for him it is impossible to completely do away with social injustice before the full realization of the City of God (van Bavel, 1993, p. 13).

Luke's reconfiguring of the Hebrew Scriptures' image of God, who frees the poor by breaking down the oppressive structures of the Egyptian rulers (Hoppe, 2004, p. 22), can complement Augustine's deficiency in addressing the sinful structures which disadvantage the poor.

Further Luke's concern revolves mainly in the present moment. He is the least apocalyptic of all the NT writers (Johnson, 1992, p. 21). He adopts the prophetic viewpoint of Moses and the Prophets that poverty is a scandal since God blesses his people with abundance in lands and possessions. If only the teachings of Moses and the Prophets were heeded, there would be no poverty among God's people.

ON GOD WHO TAKES THE SIDE OF THE POOR AND ON THE REVERSAL MOTIFS

All human beings, for Augustine, are fundamentally equal because God created the world for everyone, for rich and poor alike (Sermon 39). He rejects Aristotle's opinion that some people are slaves by nature. "Slavery is not something natural, that is, it did not belong to the original state of human beings, but it is a consequence of iniquity, adversity, and particularly of war. Equality is prescribed by the order of nature, for God created human beings as equals to one another" (van Bavel, 1993, p. 7). God created the world for everyone, that is, for rich and poor alike (see Sermon 39). Hence, in Exposition of the Book of Psalms 49.18, Augustine says that "a human person has never complete power over that which he or she possesses" (van Bavel, 1993, p. 10). Elsewhere in his writings he quotes Ps 24:1, "The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it." Besides, at birth all are naked, and at death the bones of the rich cannot be distinguished from those of the poor (Sermon 61.9). Thus, nobody is born as rich or as poor; nobody dies as such. By nature humans are equals (van Bavel, 1993, p. 8).

Augustine's view may be an appropriation or echo of the Jubilee legislation in Leviticus 25 where slaves are freed and lands or properties returned to their owners so that no one may lose his land which ultimately belongs to YHWH. "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants" (Lev 25:23). Remission of debts is another specification of the Jubilee and Sabbatical legislations (cf. Ex 23:10-11; Deut 15:1-11). The rich man's wealth is not his in the ultimate sense. The impoverishment of many, represented by Lazarus, is partly caused by a failure to follow the Jubilee legislations.

The rich man's greed reduces many people, represented by Lazarus, to poverty. Greed creates inequality among human persons, disrupting the fundamental equality which God intends for God's

creatures. Thus Augustine regards greed of a few persons as the main cause of poverty of many. Like the rich man, many people are possessed by material goods rather than possessors of them (van Bavel, 1993, p. 16).

The unjust oppression of the poor by the rich occasions the reversal motifs in Moses and the Prophets.⁶ It also leads YHWH to take the side of the poor. Luke amplifies these motifs and reconfigures this image of God because unjust oppression of the poor continues in the NT times. Likewise Augustine's "preferential option for the poor" is occasioned by unjust socio-economic structures which mire many in poverty and which created massive inequality between the rich and the poor in North Africa during his time, especially when he was the bishop of Hippo (396-430 CE).

However Augustine sees the reversal of fortune in the Parable as occasioned by piety in the case of Lazarus and impiety in the case of the rich man. Lazarus is not rewarded because of his poverty, while the rich man is not punished because of his riches (Sermon 299E.3). The rich man is refused mercy because he has failed to be merciful to Lazarus (Sermon 367.2).

Luke, on the other hand, presents the reversal in the Parable as occasioned not by the rich man's explicit oppression of Lazarus or the latter's manifestation of virtue or piety, but simply by the fact that Lazarus is poor and the rich man ignores him. God, who does not tolerate oppression and who takes the side of the poor, effects the reversal to bring about justice to the poor. In the limited goods of the Palestinian society of the NT times, a very few rich persons got the lion's share of wealth and resources; only a trickle was left for the many who are poor (Malina, 1981). The reversal of fortune, therefore, is a matter of dispensing justice. The Prophet Isaiah stresses that God will take the side of the poor because God hates injustice and will come to the aid of the poor (Isa 61:8); God ensures that the poor will have justice (Isa 66:15-16).

Augustine likewise insists that helping the poor is not merely a matter of charity but a matter of justice. In *Expositions on Psalms* 95:15, he writes: "If you were giving something that was your own, then it would be pure largesse, but since you give what is God's, you are repaying a debt." In a way, justice entails giving God his due. Augustine says in *Expositions on Psalms* 147:12: "God does not demand much of you. He asks back what he gave you, and from Him you take what is enough for you" (Mijares, 2006, p. 77). Concretely, justice is giving to the poor what is due to them. He writes: "The superfluous goods of the rich are necessary goods for the poor. The rich possess things which belong to others" (Sermon 206.2). In *Expositions on Psalms* 147.12, Augustine underscores that possessions held in superfluity belong by divine law to the Lazaruses at the rich men's gates. Hence, the rich man's superfluous goods belong to Lazarus who starves at his gate. He should have given Lazarus what is rightfully his. Similarly in the Torah, caring for the poor is not an act of charity but God's demand from his people who have been given land as part of God's promise to Abraham. The fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham (specifically possessing a land, becoming a great nation and being a blessing to other families cf. Gen 12:1-3; 15; 17:20; Sir 44:19-21), that is, there would be no poor among God's people, is adopted by Luke as a central component of his ideology.⁷

The Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10), whose reversal motifs are amplified in the Song of Mary (Lk 1:46-55) and in the Parable, reflects an understanding of God in the Torah—a God who takes the side of the poor. This God would like the poor to benefit from God's gift of abundance. Further God works counter-culturally within Jewish culture to invert values and hierarchical structures within the greater Greco-Roman society. The Parable overturns the honor-shame game.⁸

Lazarus is honored not because of his own effort but because God honors him; the rich man is shamed not because he loses in

the game, but because God takes the side of Lazarus whom the rich man ignores.

Like the Torah, the Song of Hannah does not idealize poverty, nor does the Parable. But the Parable portrays a God who reverses the fortunes of the "Lazaruses" that they may get what is rightfully theirs. The reversal motifs in Moses and the Prophets aim to reform and revolutionize structures which oppress the poor and further enrich the wealthy and powerful. The reversals must take effect in this life, not in the next. This is Luke's improvement of the beliefs of the עֲנָוִים in the eschatological reversal. Further, the image of God that Luke reconfigures from Moses and the Prophets "exalts the poor and brings down the rich" in this life by breaking down the oppressive structures of the Egyptian rulers instead of just making them more compassionate to the Hebrew slaves. This God gives the liberated Hebrew slaves a good land to ensure that they will not slide back into poverty in the same way that Lazarus ends up in the bosom of Abraham where there is no more poverty.

Further, the reversal motifs undermine the many aspects of the Mediterranean patronage system into which Jesus and his followers were born. They also controvert the popular theology which regards wealth as a sign of blessing and poverty as curse. The Lukan Jesus jolts his hearers and the readers of the Parable when he presents Abraham as favoring Lazarus and disregarding the rich man.

ON THE LOVE FOR GOD AND LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR

A proper reading of the Scriptures, according to Augustine, leads to love for God and love for neighbor. "Whoever thinks that he understands the divine Scriptures or any part of them so that it does not build the double love for God and for neighbor does not understand it at all" (Froehlich, 2004, p. 5; Esmeralda, 1999, p. 22). Conversely Augustine says: "Whoever finds a lesson [in scripture] useful to the building of charity, even though he has not said what

the author may be shown to have intended in that place, has not been deceived, nor is he lying in any way" (*De Doctrina Christiana* 1:36.40).

Augustine's understanding of the Scriptures is in consonance with the Parable's contention that a proper reading of Moses and the Prophets leads one to care for the poor. The Lukan Jesus addresses the Parable to the Pharisees, to the Sadducees and to those who improperly read Moses and the Prophets as shown in their failure to care for the poor.

Luke combines his reconfiguration of the שמע *"imperative listen"* (Deut 6:4-9; see also Deut 11:13-21; Num 15:37-41)⁹ and of the command to love one's neighbor (Lev 19:18) into the imperative *"Listen to Moses and the Prophets."* The שמע underscores listening or hearing which requires putting into practice what is heard and loving God, the Lord, alone. Loving one's neighbor, on the other hand, connotes taking care of the poor.

The synoptic gospels combine the שמע and the command to love one's neighbor, forming a double commandment of love of God and love of neighbor. Among the synoptic gospels (see Mk 12:29-31; Mt 22:37-39), only Luke contextualizes the double-love commandment within the parable of the Good Samaritan, emphasizing the love of neighbor. This parable commends the Samaritan, the "stranger," for acting as neighbor to the needy man. It is noteworthy that Leviticus 19:18 uses the term πλησίον for neighbor. Elsewhere neighbor is rendered ἀδελφός. Πλησίον's primary meaning is "fellowman." Hence Luke reconfigures Leviticus' definition of neighbor in his version of the double love commandment. By "neighbor," Luke refers to anybody, especially the poor or the needy. OSA's Constitutions No. 200 (2002 Edition) echo this Lukan understanding of neighbor:

The social apostolate ... ought to permeate all apostolic activity, for it flows from love of God and neighbor. ... (This) is demanded

by our very Augustinian brotherhood, for we are human beings and “every human being is a neighbor to every other human being” (See also Nos. 160, 182 and 183 of 2008 Edition).

By combining love of God and neighbor, Luke hints that loving God is connected with loving one’s neighbor. This is stressed in OSA’s *Ratio Institutionis* No. 20 which reads: “It is Augustine’s conviction that love of God comes first as a commandment, but that love of neighbor comes first on the level of practice.” Several texts in Deuteronomy say that YHWH, who loves his people, requires them to love their neighbors as a way of reciprocating his love for them:

When you make your “neighbor” a loan of any kind, you shall not go into the house to take the pledge (Deut 24:10).

Do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward “your needy neighbor” (Deut 15:7).

Open your hand to “the poor and needy neighbor” in your land . (Deut 15:11).

In the Parable the rich man fails to love his neighbor (Lazarus) as himself. Although he is tormented in Hades, his concern just revolves around his five biological brothers. He shows no concern for the poor—his fellow men—his neighbors. He is one of those who read the Scriptures improperly; he fails to listen to Moses and the Prophets. Moreover, Lazarus is no stranger to the rich man. He is thrown “ἐβέβλητο” (v 20) at the rich man’s gate where he is forced to beg. The rich man knows Lazarus because he calls him by name when he pleads that Abraham send him to his brothers (v 25).

Augustine also says that all persons, rich and poor alike, are brothers and sisters because all are born of the same parents—Adam and Eve (van Bavel, 1993, p. 10). Luke likewise portrays the rich man and Lazarus, being both descendants of Abraham, as brothers. However, the rich man’s failure to heed Moses and the

Prophets, shown in his willful disregard of Lazarus, severs his tie with Abraham. The true children of Abraham are those who listen to Moses and the Prophets and put into practice their teachings.

This Lukan view may be an influence of Deuteronomy's assumption that all Israelites belong to one family. Leviticus 19:18 uses the term πλησίον for "neighbor," but Deuteronomy uses ἀδελφος which primarily means "brother." Further, Deut 15:1-11 refers to the poor as brothers of the wealthy no less than six times in the eleven verses that make up the Law of Release (15:2, 3, 7[twice], 9, 11) (Hoppe, 1986, p. 373). In a community composed of brothers and sisters there should be no poverty (Deut 15:4).

ON COMMUNITY OF GOODS AND LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

Augustine exhorts his followers to live together in a community, "being of one mind and one heart" (Acts 4:32) on the way to God (cf. Rule I.2). In this community, "it should be possible for rich and poor, the lowly and the mighty, to relate to each other as equals and brothers," and everything must be shared in common (van Bavel, 1984, p. 54).

Among you there can be no question of personal property. Rather, take care that you share everything in common ... each should be given what he personally needs. For this is what you read in the Acts of the Apostles: "Everything they owned was held in common, and each one received whatever he had need of" (Acts 4:32, 35) (Rule I.3).

For Augustine, "community of goods is the first expression and the first realization of love for one's neighbor" (van Bavel, 1984, p. 48). In theory love for God comes first, but love for one's neighbor takes precedence in practice. One's love for God is gauged by how he loves his neighbor. van Bavel notes that almost the whole Rule of Augustine deals with the relationship of community members

among themselves and that love of God is mentioned explicitly only once [Chapter IV] (van Bavel, 1984, p. 59). Further OSA Constitutions No. 66, which speak about evangelical poverty, state:

The Rule recommends simplicity of life with regard to all material goods with the result that we are less encumbered in dedicating ourselves to the service of our neighbors, especially the poor: It is better to want little, than to have too much.

Love for one's neighbor starts with sharing one's material possessions. This leads one to openness toward others – the first form of living together. Sharing helps us overcome selfishness, while desiring to possess more makes us imprisoned in selfishness. "If a selfish person has a little cup of water, he is not satisfied with it; he desires a whole stream" (Sermon 50.4.6). Hence Augustine emphasizes simplicity of lifestyle. "It is better to be able to make do with little than to have plenty" (Rule III.5). Paraphrasing Augustine's Sermon on Psalm 38.11, van Bavel writes:

The struggle for property generally degenerates into violent conflict; possessing more than others easily becomes a source of injustice, abuse of power, and repression. All of this prevents people from truly living together in community (van Bavel, 1984, p. 52).

Augustine considers Acts 4:32-35 as the main Scriptural basis of his Rule. Acts 4:32-35 is the fulfillment of the Lukan reconfiguration (Lk 4:18-19) of Isaiah's amplification of the jubilee legislation (Isa 61:1-2) and the ideals of the Sabbath release of the Torah (e.g. Ex 23:10-11; Deut 15:1-11). Luke is the most interested in *πτωχός* "poor" among the NT writers, but *πτωχός* is not found in Acts. This is so because the *κοινωνία* "fellowship" of the early Christian community enabled community members to share everything they had with their neighbors. And there was no one in need (*ἐνδεής*) among them (Acts 4:34). Poverty was relatively rooted out. However, Acts 5:1-11 (Ananias and Sapphira's deception of the community

regarding the actual price of the land which they sold) shows that this *κοινωνία* was more of an ideal than a reality for some members kept properties for themselves.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Like Luke, who adopts Moses and the Prophets' refusal to idealize poverty, Augustine never sees poverty as a value in itself. Augustine is so passionate in uplifting the plight of the poor. Like the prophet Isaiah and the evangelist Luke, he prioritizes caring for the poor over religious practices. However, Augustine occasionally regards the poor as the rich persons' way to heaven, and he deems it impossible to completely do away with social injustices in this life. Luke's reconfiguring of Moses and the Prophets' image of God, who frees the poor by breaking down the oppressive structures of the Egyptian rulers, can complement Augustine's tendency to believe that justice will not be completely served in this life.

Further, Luke and Augustine agree with Moses and the Prophets in seeing the reversal motifs as occasioned by the unjust oppression of the poor by the rich. Augustine, however, also regards the reversals as occasioned by piety in the case of Lazarus and impiety in the case of the rich man. Luke's view of the reversal motifs, as also occasioned by God's preferential option for the poor and God's way of effecting justice, can supplement Augustine's view. Luke's insistence that the reversals must take place in this life can also supplement Augustine's tendency to seek the ultimate justice for the poor in the next life.

Moreover, the Lukan amplification of the *שמע* and the command to love one's neighbor into the imperative "Listen to Moses and the Prophets" can inform Augustine's emphasis on loving one's neighbor as an expression of loving God. Luke emphasizes love of neighbor in his version of the double love commandment.

Lastly, Augustine regards the sharing of goods of the first

Christian community (Acts 4:32-35) as the inspiration of his Rule and as a way of loving one's neighbor. Luke sees this text as the realization of Deuteronomy's teaching that among God's people there will be no one who is poor. But Luke recognizes that this is more of an ideal than a reality. Luke's realistic view of the sharing of goods can complement Augustine's idealism.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ The massive gap between the rich and the poor brought about hunger to billions of people all over the world. The Augustinian Hunger Awareness Campaign lists the following facts about hunger: Population of the 50 developed countries is 900 million, less than one-sixth of the world's total

population. Population of the developing world, with access to fewer goods and services, is 5 billion. More than 1.2 billion live below the international poverty line, are undernourished, with stunted growth, slowed thinking, sapped energy. Poor families spend 70 per cent of their income for food. In the developed world, the average is 10 per cent. Every year 10 million people die of hunger. Of these, 6 million are children under the age of 5. Every day, 25,000 people die of hunger. Every five seconds, one person dies of hunger. The world produces enough food to feed 120 per cent of the population. Economic and political decisions prevent access to sufficient food by one-third of the world's population. Launched during the World Food Day on October 16, 2003, this Campaign is part of the Order's celebration of the 1650th anniversary of the birth of St. Augustine (354-2004). It gathers support for reaching the Millennium Development Goal to halve the number of people who die of hunger by 2015 (Purcaro, 2005, p. 9).

² Fitzmyer argues that when Luke wrote the Gospel, only the Torah, Nevi'im and Psalms could have been regarded as authoritative. His claim is based on Luke's explicit quotations: 16 from the Torah; 16 from the Prophets; 14 from the Psalms. Luke has no explicit quotation from other books of the Kethuvim (1992, p. 532).

³ Augustine's writings which make reference to the Parable include: *Sermons* 14.4, 15A.2, 15A.5, 33A.4, 41.4, 41.5, 86.16, 97.3, 102.3, 102.4, 113A.2, 113A.3, 113B.3, 129.9, 178.3, 299C.1, 299E.3, 299E.4; *Letters* 78.6, 164.3.7, 166.9.27, 187.6, 259.5; *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 34, 37, 49, 58, 70, 73, 86; *On Care to be Had for the Dead* 4, 17, 18; *The Eight Questions of Dulcitius* 4.47, 6.58; *A Treatise on the Soul and Its Origin* 2.8.4, 4.21.15, 4.23.16, 4.24.16, 4.29.19; *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 12.33.63; *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 44.6, 49.9, 55.2; *Eighty-Three Different Questions* 67.5; *A Treatise on Nature and Grace* 65.55; *Reply to Faustus, the Manichaean* 12.4, 33.5 (Wiles, 1995, pp. 118-9).

⁴ "Option for the poor" runs through the Scriptures. Taking the side of the poor, the Church has reiterated option for the poor in various social encyclicals, but it is the 1979 Conference of Latin American Bishops in Puebla, Mexico that has defined and highly emphasized the term "preferential option for the poor." The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines considers "preferential option for the poor" as the pastoral

thrust of the Philippine Church, especially in becoming the Church of the Poor (Mijares, 2003, pp. 104-6).

⁵ Πλούσιος, Luke's denotation of the rich man in the Parable, appears 28 times in the NT; it occurs 11 times in Luke's Gospel and only five times in the Letter to the Hebrews. Conversely, out of 34 occurrences of πτωχός in the NT, ten are found in Luke; five are found in Matthew and five also in Mark. Hence among the NT writers, Luke is the most interested in πτωχός which is a designation of the poor man and sometimes of Lazarus (Morgenthaler, 1992, pp. 133, 138).

⁶ The reversal of fortune themes which occur several times in the Gospel of Luke (1:52-53; 6:20-26; 13:30; 14:11; 16:19-26; 18:14), and are pointedly illustrated in the Parable, are a narrative amplification of several reversal motifs regarding the rich and the poor in the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. Deut 8:11-20; 1 Sam 2:1-10; Ezek 21:26; Ps 89:10; Ps 107:9; Job 12:19; Sir 10:14). The motif of the eschatological reversal of fortunes for the rich and the poor belongs to the religious folklore of ordinary people (עניי), the poor who crave for the justice of God against the injustices which they experience in life (Bauckham, 1991, pp. 225-246).

⁷ Luke emphasizes the Abrahamic promises in the Magnificat (Lk 1:54-55) and the Benedictus (1:72-73). He also stresses how it is to claim to be a descendant of Abraham (3:8). The references to the Abrahamic promises in the Magnificat and the Benedictus allude to the references to Abraham in Moses and the Prophets (see Ex 2:24; 6:3-4, 8; 32:13; 31:1; Lev 26:42; Deut 1:8; 9:5, 27; 2 Kings 13:23; 1 Chr 16:5-18; Neh 9:7-8; Jer 11:5; Mic 7:20). (Kurz, 1999, p. 151; Dahl, 1966, p. 150).

⁸ Honor and shame are pivotal values in the social world of the NT and of the Bible as a whole. Honor or shame can be gained or lost in an honor-shame (challenge-response) game. But Lazarus cannot challenge the rich man because only the equals can play (Malina & Neyrey, 1991a).

⁹ "Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone" (Deut 6:4). Observant Jews enunciate the Shema twice a day, and in enunciating it, they must understand it and put into practice what are required of them (Lamm, 1998, pp. 13-8).

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